

# Summary of the August 7, 2012 East Boston Community Meeting

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## **EAST BOSTON COMMUNITY MEETING**

### **Mitigation Input Regarding Resort Destination Casino Proposal**

**August 7, 2012**

#### **I. Opening Remarks:**

*Director of the Office of Neighborhood Services, Jay Walsh, calls meeting to order: Purpose to determine what concerns residents about the casino proposal, not whether they support or not.*

#### **II. Public Comment:**

- Vladislav - make sure that the community gets max benefits. Do you know how much money are we talking about for the local community? How much is the casino willing to give back? Is there a rough number? If so then we can think about what we're going to do with it.
- Michael - Bus Agent at IBEW. All about jobs for them and their members.
- Mary - Concerns that the risk that they are taking with the community will out way the benefits. Worried about crime, traffic, drinking, corruption that will come along with the casino. Hard enough that they already share East Boston with the airport and the impact that it has.
- William - Promising that 200 million in revenue yearly. Thinks that this number is inaccurate and inflated. Worried about Suffolk Downs being able to maintain their property and the fact that they are potentially facing bankruptcy. What will make Suffolk Downs casino more profitable than the rest of Caesar's casinos?
- Amanda - Agree that we need jobs for people in this community. Is there already something included that stipulates that jobs must go to East Boston residents, especially residents of color. Can we put that in the agreement?
- Diane - have been to most of the meetings. Wants to go on record. East Boston Chamber of Commerce has been supportive of the casino since 2002. Suffolk has been on the board for a long time. Suffolk Downs has been in the community for 77 years. They are not coming to the table as a stranger. We do not want to see our business community compromised in any way and want to make sure that they are recipients of the proposed benefits. The Chamber will be doing their own study to make recommendations to the city regarding the benefits that they would like, that study will be available in a few weeks. Had a meeting with Suffolk Downs two weeks ago. SD presented to their membership. Wants to make sure that they keep their promises about the business interaction with the casino. They are hopeful that the \$150 million worth of products that they need to buy yearly for supplies will be purchased from local merchants. Make sure that they are able to see the proposal by the casino with regard to the impact on small and local business. Wants to be able to have improvements to the location of the businesses (improved sidewalks, lighting, visual, etc..) Education programs available to the business owners in the community. We need to make sure to develop a brand of EB with major programs to bring our small business community together and more vibrant.

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*Jay Walsh mentions that this is the first of many meetings and other opportunities for people to voice their concerns. Office hours on Thursday 8/9/2012 from 8am to 8pm. Maverick Landing Community Room, 31 Liverpool Street.*

- Jennifer - thanks for having this forum and other opportunities. I am opposed to the casino, just want to put that on record. Concerns: Crime is a huge concern for many people. Does this require an increased BPD presence and security hired by the casino. Traffic - need to do traffic studies and planning regarding public transport. Concerned about decrease in property value. Who would want to buy a home near a casino? Social impacts: there are some requirements for gambling addiction services, hope that is true for SD. Environmental Impact- should be LED certified or have some solar or other alternative. energy sources. Opportunities for promoting local businesses in the area
- Brian - new resident to EB. Biggest concern is the fact that Caesars is waging a campaign against EB. They are trying to buy votes in the city. Have connected with Chamber of Commerce as a marketing arm. Mayor mentioned it in a State of the City. Advertising on the T. Concerns that they are spending \$\$ to buy T votes of EB. Thinks that it's important for the people of EB know how much money that Caesars is spending on advertising before the vote. Does the Mayor have any leeway to initiate a conversation about the transparency of the campaign?
- Celeste - Transparency. Can the HCAC request more transparency with regard to Caesar's spending on advertising and vote gathering. Job - what's management and what's union? Like to see more detail with salaries? Where is the threshold with regard to management vs union positions. Potential business opportunities, only 10? Like to see more detail about what the real business opportunities are, RFP process, etc.. View of what they're spending. View of what the real job prospect is.
- John - lots of concerns. Whatever mitigation agreement that we have, make sure the \$ stays in EB. Lack of information re: T avg. \$42,000 salaries, what are people really making? Sad about the lack of Latino representation. EB stands to be most impacted. If the casino makes lots of money, the impacts on our community will be greater (traffic, impact on local business, property values). If the casino doesn't make lots of money, concerned that they will increase the number of slot machines, impact of compulsive gambling, drug use, job loss and foreclosures, and lack of ability to keep up their end of the mitigation agreement with the city.
- Krista - have lot of concerns. Traffic! Like auto phone calls to residents about when meetings are going to occur. Like to know the website of where EB can be informed of. Especially in multiple languages. What percentage of jobs legally have to go to EB residents? % of jobs that the law requires to go to EB residents. Concerns that as years go by, fewer jobs will go to EB residents. Better security plan. Would like someone from BPD to address security concerns. Would like casino to post rules and regulations of what they can and cannot do. No clocks? How they manipulate the air in the building? Would like the grass on 1A to be kept and flowered properly and often. Assessed value of each house of the neighborhood. And then check again in 5 years to see if tax credit is necessary for the diminished value of homes.
- Leroy - most directly affected by whatever is built at SD. Concerned with being able to continue living in his location. He is 60 feet from the boundary of Suffolk Downs. Concerned that he will

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be facing casino right across from his building. Lights? Direct and reflective? What about the winter? With the plows all night long. Increased insurance costs with the number of traffic accidents in the area. Will this affect my health. Test pilings indicated that the casino may be location 100 yards from property. Mitigation agreement needs to include a proposition to ensure that property values are not negatively affected. Since Waldemar Ave stand to be the most affected we need to be able to possible get financial compensation.

- Illeyna - in addition to the overall impacts, we need to address the design of the project. Must go through design review with COB due to the size and scope of the project. Really important that the community is made aware of those hearings and early enough that someone that is close enough to the casino will be able to provide valuable input before construction begins. Really important to provide notification of all design review actions. Also: planning aspect, especially with Orient Heights. Is there possibility for an independent reviewer not paid by Caesars that can review their study to make sure that they are accurate and make sense.
- Lilliana- Question about the process that is followed by ONS. Are these videos going to be shown on-line and will they will be downloadable? And the notes as well? Will they be posted? Concerned with the voting process. Lots of EB residents are not able to vote yet. Are there any alternatives to the proposed voting process to allow residents who are not eligible or registered to vote to have some voice beyond the public meetings, when the actual voting takes place?
- Gina - here as neighborhood resident. Like to say the level of participation this issue has inspired is inspiring. Thinks that the casino represents big dreams. Where does EB want to be in 5 years? 10 years? We should position ourselves to be able to get what we want. Revenue go back to city. Tax credits? Low interests loans that will help people remain invested in this community. We want more owner-occupied homes in EB.
- Doug - new EB resident. How will the residents benefit economically from the casino? Are there goals set for residents during construction for jobs? For minorities, for women? Referenced UMass project with regard to BRJP rules.
- Giordana - Ads by casino at SD. There is no substance to the ads. It's propaganda. And it's wrong. The video that they put out about traffic on their website says that they will be contained to routes, including 145, which is Bennington Street. Independent traffic analysis, independent crime analysis. Independent cost-benefit analysis. We need you to be the independent voice to tell us how it really is. There's really no substance in any of the info that they've given so far. We really want you to hold their feet to the fire to make sure we're not just taking their pass-offs.
- Very concerned. Have no legal representation. How do we go about getting legal representation for the neighborhood? We need legal representation to guide us to know what to ask for. We don't just want senior programs and child care programs. That's something the city should be offering in some way anyway. We need legal representation for this monumental task
- Louis - IBEW worker at SD. Is there a way that you can let us all know about the process and the voting? Want to make sure people know when events are, and what exactly they are voting for.

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Website at SD to get people connected to them. Want people to be able to get as much info as possible.

Jay Walsh: see [www.Cityofboston.gov/gaming](http://www.Cityofboston.gov/gaming), [HCAC@cityofboston.gov](mailto:HCAC@cityofboston.gov), @bosgamingcomm, facebook/bostongamingcommittee.

- Vincent - first thing: 40 million they're offering to fix the roads is a joke. From Callahan Tunnel to Saugus is bigger than the Big Dig. Downsizing of the casino. Put some of the gambling on boats, give them an island, spread the problem less from EB. We don't need any more negative impacts on this community.
- David - SD has been a good neighbor to EB. Concerns are: if there is a casino and enforcing the mitigation agreement. A lot of times they don't come through with promises. The City made a lot of promises about improving the waterfront but we haven't seen those yet. Health impacts with the traffic. We already have the airport. Interested in seeing what the health impacts of the casino are. Needs to be some guarantees that we're going to get what we ask for.
- George - guarantees, need to be able to be backed up. Given that a partner of this project is Vorando Realty, we need to make sure that there is something that backs up the mitigation agreement that they have made. Wants to make sure that we can enforce their promises as part of mitigation agreement.
- Pauline - the only thing that would ever make me sell my house and leave would be a casino in EB. No amount of mitigation would make up for the negative impact that the casino will devastate EB with. Including the impact on the businesses. Promises are promises and we know that they aren't always kept. Really surprised that the mayor is supporting the casino. Inconceivable that he would support something that is so opposite to the historical value of the city. EB will never ever recover from the impact. Why can't we get email or postcards from the City letting us know about when the meetings are going to be? SD sends out info all the time. Thinking about the benefits for the community. Knowing how scarce the resources are for EB. EB has needs. Have a foundation that is established so that the funds go to EB. We need to make sure the funds are there in perpetuity to benefit the community on an on-going basis, even if the casino fails
- Michael - process. How did the city arrive at its position that this casino is a good idea. What did the city do in the way of due diligence to get to the point where they said that this was a good idea? Did they look at peer reviewed journals? Academic data? What did they look at? What possible scenario could play out that mayor and the Boston City Council could change their position? Are you guys going to answer these questions? And post the answers online? Or are you just going to post the questions on the website?

Jay Walsh: *we're in the fact finding process right now. We are gathering information. We're going to get more specific and give way more opportunities to give people feedback on their concerns. We are being as transparent as possible throughout this whole process.*

- Would like a 5 minute commute from Ted Williams Tunnel to my house. From 1A to home. Wished the mayor's office reached out to the community before making the decision to support the casino.

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- Mary - Did the mayor appoint the people here that are at this meeting? Who is the HCAC? Are there anyone from EB on it? *[Jay Walsh provides information on HCAC and how it was established.]* We also got shafted by the Mayor on the waterfront. Southie got everything. I would like to see parts of the casino. Not the traffic. But the design was nice, would like to see it saying that it is located in EAST BOSTON, not just BOSTON. Let's get one thing done. Do we do the casino or not?
- Sean - Glad people are coming out. Legal representation is a great idea for us in EB. We need to be able to understand the process. Would really like to understand what these engineers have done in their analyses of the traffic impacts. I want that data to be posted on a website that everyone can access. I want to be able to come to my own conclusion based on the data that they have found. Can that be mandated by CoB? And make it so that the average person can understand it. Spoke a few meetings ago, and mentioned public transit. SD mentioned that they haven't made any conversation with MBTA yet. That's unacceptable. They need to step up and meet with MBTA. Want to make sure we get everything we can from this. Want to make sure that they are doing their part and the COB is doing their part.

### III. Conclusion:

*Jay Walsh wraps up meeting: This is only the first step. The City encourages all feedback at [www.CityofBoston.gov/gaming](http://www.CityofBoston.gov/gaming), [HCAC@cityofboston.gov](mailto:HCAC@cityofboston.gov)*